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(54) Dog toy

(57) A dog toy comprising two tennis balls (4,5) secured to the ends of a thermoplastic bar (1) and a molding and bonding process for incorporating hollow, flexible objects such as tennis balls in an injection molded thermoplastic body.

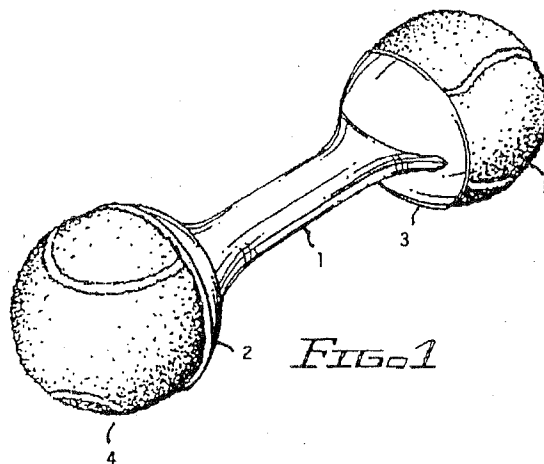


FIG. 1

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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a toy. In particular, the present invention relates to a dog toy.

[0002] A dumbbell-shaped dog toy is provided which has two end portions formed by tennis balls. The tennis balls are connected by a supporting bar. At both ends of the bar, cups may be provided wherein the tennis balls are incorporated.

[0003] In the following, the dog toy will be described with reference to drawings.

Fig. 1 is a top, front and left perspective view of a toy for dogs according to the invention;

Fig. 2 is a top plan view of Fig. 1 with bottom view being a mirror image thereof;

Fig. 3 is a front plan view thereof with the bottom view being a mirror image thereof;

Fig. 4 is a right end elevational view thereof; and

Fig. 5 is a left end elevational view thereof.

[0004] The dumbbell-shaped dog toy shown in Figs. 1 to 5 comprises a bar 1 having at both ends a cup 2,3, respectively. In each of the cups, a tennis ball is incorporated and bonded thereto. Preferably, the tennis balls are provided such that the top plan view according to Fig. 2 is the mirror image of the front plan view of Fig. 3. Bar 1 may be flat. Generally, the dumbbell-shaped dog toy resembles a bone.

[0005] The dog toy offers the following advantages in combination:

- (1) The dog toy has the shape of a bone.
- (2) The soft tennis balls are chewing objects which are popular with dogs.
- (3) The tennis balls may be replaced, if necessary.
- (4) The dog toy cannot be swallowed due to its size even by big dogs.
- (5) Two dogs can play with it at the same time.
- (6) The dog toy may be used as a fetching object.
- (7) The dog toy may be easily taken out of the dogs mouth.
- (8) The dog toy shows exciting rotation and wobbling movements when thrown.
- (9) The dog toy bounces unpredictably.
- (10) The dog toy reaches quickly its rest position without much rolling.
- (11) The dog toy floats on water.

[0006] The tennis balls may be colored or fluorescent. The bar may be made of plastic and it may be suitably coated, colored and/or perfumed.

[0007] This invention also relates to thermoplastic products incorporating flexible, hollow objects such as tennis balls which may or may not be pressurized and to a molding process for producing such products. An important characteristic of the new and novel process is its capability for bonding hollow, flexible objects to the

thermoplastic body of a product.

[0008] Various types of molded thermoplastic products are known which incorporate different types of separately fabricated objects. Some such incorporated objects are secured to the thermoplastic body by adhesives such as urethanes, cyanoacrylates etc. Other non-plastic, non-pressurized, solid objects are sometimes inserted into an injection mold in a manner which allows the molten plastic to flow around a portion of the object, thereby trapping the object and holding it in place in the product. The use of adhesives for bonding is generally undesirable because of environmental concerns, and the entrapment method is often not a practical approach as it limits design configurations.

[0009] The molding and bonding method of the present invention is not known in the prior art as a means for securing flexible, hollow objects to a thermoplastic body.

[0010] This invention relates to a molding and bonding process for incorporating hollow, flexible objects such as tennis balls in an injection molded thermoplastic body and to products produced by the process.

[0011] It is, therefore, one object of this invention to provide a new and improved process for incorporating hollow, flexible objects in a molded plastic body.

[0012] Another object of this invention is to provide such a new and improved process which causes the hollow, flexible object to adhere reliably to the plastic body without the use of adhesives and without the use of entrapment as a securing means.

[0013] A further object of this invention is to provide such a new and improved molding and bonding process which achieves the desired bonding action simultaneously and along with the same injection molding operation that forms the molded body.

[0014] A still further object of this invention is to provide such a new and improved molding and bonding process which will reliably bond a tennis ball to a thermoplastic body.

[0015] A still further object of this invention is to provide a novel toy for a dog through the use of the improved molding and bonding method of this invention.

[0016] Further objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent as the following description proceeds and the features of novelty which characterize the invention will be pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed to and forming a part of this specification.

[0017] The present invention may be more readily described by reference to the accompanying drawing, in which:

Fig. 6 is a perspective view of a product in the form of a toy for a dog, the toy having been produced by the molding and bonding process of this invention;

Fig. 7 is a front plan view of Fig. 1;

Fig. 8 is a cross-section view of Fig. 2 taken along

line 3-3; and
 Fig. 9 is a cross-section view showing the product of Figs. 1-3 being formed in a mold in accordance with the improved molding and bonding process of the invention.

[0018] Referring more particularly to the drawing by characters of reference, Figs. 1-3 disclose a toy 10 for a dog, the toy being representative of the type of product that can be made using the molding and bonding process of this invention.

[0019] As shown in the drawing, toy 10 comprises a central supporting bar 11 with a tennis ball 12 secured at each end thereof, the overall configuration taking the appearance of a bone with a joint at each end.

[0020] Bar 11, which is made of a tough, non-brittle, elastomeric, thermoplastic material, has a central span 13 with a cross-section approximating a flattened oval. Each end of span 13 terminates in a cup 14, the cup and attached span 13 resembling a shallow champagne glass and its stem, Cup 14 has an inside spherical surface matching that of tennis ball 12 so that the tennis ball fits snugly inside the cup as shown more clearly in Fig. 8.

[0021] Toy 10 is intended for use as an object to be retrieved or "fetched" by a dog. A dog that has learned to fetch a ball will readily fetch this toy and may be trained to grab bar 11 rather than one of the tennis balls, leaving the tennis balls free of dog saliva for the dog's master to grasp. The incorporation of tennis balls in the toy results in a lively toy that bounces when it is thrown and will float when thrown in a pool or lake thereby attracting the dog and adding excitement to the fetching game.

[0022] The process by which toy 10 is made in accordance with the improved molding and bonding process of this invention is illustrated by the simplified diagram of Fig. 9.

[0023] Fig. 9 is a cross-sectional representation showing a molding apparatus 20 which is employed in the fabrication of a toy 10. As shown, the two tennis balls 12 are already in place for the molding process. The cross-section of Fig. 9 is taken in the vicinity of the parting plane of the mold.

[0024] As shown in Fig. 9, a temperature controlled mold 21 encloses a cavity 22 into which the molten thermoplastic material is to be injected. Mold 21 encloses the surfaces of cavity 22 that correspond with the surfaces of bar 11 which are exposed in the final product, Circular openings 23 at the left and right ends of the mold (as shown in Fig. 9) are filled by the tennis balls 12. The tennis balls are held firmly in place against openings 23 by pressure blocks 24, the pressure blocks being urged in the direction of arrows 25.

[0025] With cavity 22 completely enclosed, a molten thermoplastic material, preferably a thermoplastic polyurethane elastomer with a durometer between 83A and 90A, is injected through plastic input tubes 28 into the

temperature controlled mold through water chamber 29. As cavity 22 is filled, the molten thermoplastic material penetrates the fibrous covering 26 of tennis balls 12, completely enveloping the fibers and bonding to the fibers as well as to the flexible elastic body of the tennis balls to which the fibrous covering is bonded.

[0026] Upon completion of the injection procedure, the injected material is allowed to cool and solidify. The mold is then opened and the finished product is removed.

[0027] In accordance with the stated objects of the invention, a single-process molding and bonding operation is thus provided, the bonding being accomplished without the use of adhesives or bodily entrapment of incorporated parts.

[0028] It should be noted that the tennis ball may contain a movable object such as a bell 27 in its hollow interior for producing a noise to excite the dog.

[0029] Furthermore, the product according to the invention may be used as a toy for children, or for therapeutic purposes.

Claims

1. A dumbbell-shaped dog toy having two end portions formed by tennis balls.
2. A method for producing a product comprising one or more flexible objects incorporated in and bonded to an injection molded thermoplastic body, the method comprising the steps of:
 - clamping said one or more flexible, objects against one or more strategically placed openings in a temperature controlled mold such that the portion of said object's surface that is to be bonded forms a part of the inner surface of the mold and is exposed to the injected thermoplastic material,
 - injecting a molten thermoplastic material into the mold,
 - allowing the thermoplastic material to cool and solidify, opening the mold, and
 - removing the finished product.
3. The method set forth in claim 1 wherein said objects comprise hollow flexible internally pressurizable objects.
4. The method set forth in claim 1 wherein:
 - said thermoplastic material is a thermoplastic polyurethane elastomer with a durometer between 83A and 90A.
5. The method set forth in claim 2 wherein, said one or more hollow, flexible, internally pressurized objects have fibrous outer surfaces which

absorb the molten thermoplastic material and enhance the bonding action.

6. The method set forth in claim 2 wherein:
said one or more hollow, flexible, internally pressurizable objects are tennis balls. 5
7. The method set forth in claim 2 wherein:
- said temperature controlled mold forms the exposed surfaces of the thermoplastic body of the finished product, 10
 - said strategically placed openings allow said molten thermoplastic material to flow over those surfaces of said one or more hollow, flexible, internally pressurizable objects which are intended to be bonded to said thermoplastic body, and 15
 - said thermoplastic material bonds to said exposed surfaces of said one or more hollow, flexible, internally pressurizable objects as said thermoplastic material cools and solidifies., 20
8. A toy for a dog produced by the method of claim 2 wherein: 25
- said one or more hollow, flexible, internally pressurizable objects comprise two tennis balls, and
 - said thermoplastic body comprises a central supporting bar with cups at both ends for receiving and bonding to said two tennis balls, 30
 - said toy being intended for use as an object to be retrieved by a dog. 35
9. The toy set forth in claim 8 in further combination with a noise maker loosely contained within one of the tennis balls.
10. Use of a toy set forth in claim 8 or 9 as a toy for children. 40

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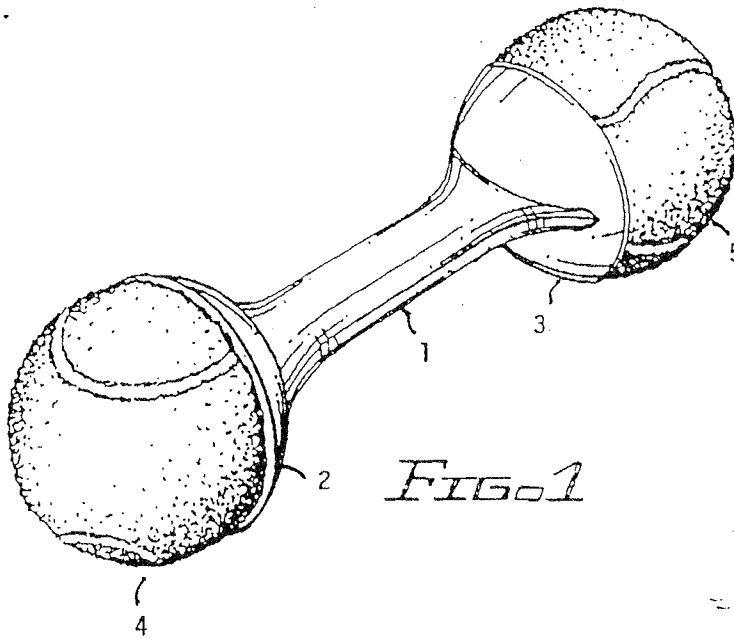


FIG. 1

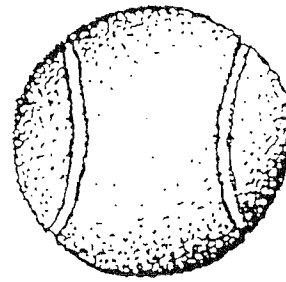


FIG. 4

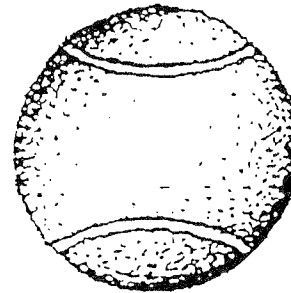


FIG. 5

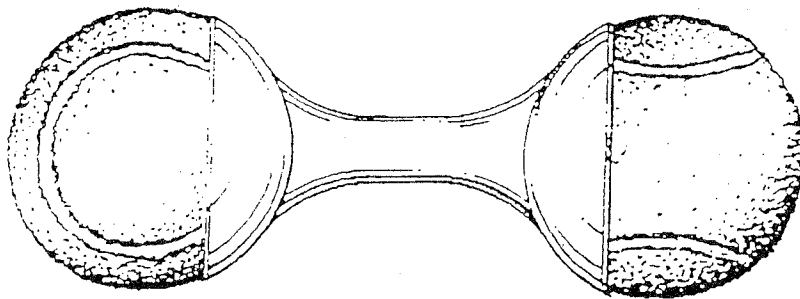


FIG. 2

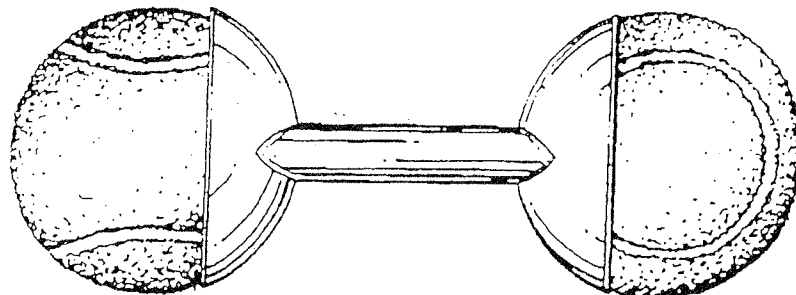
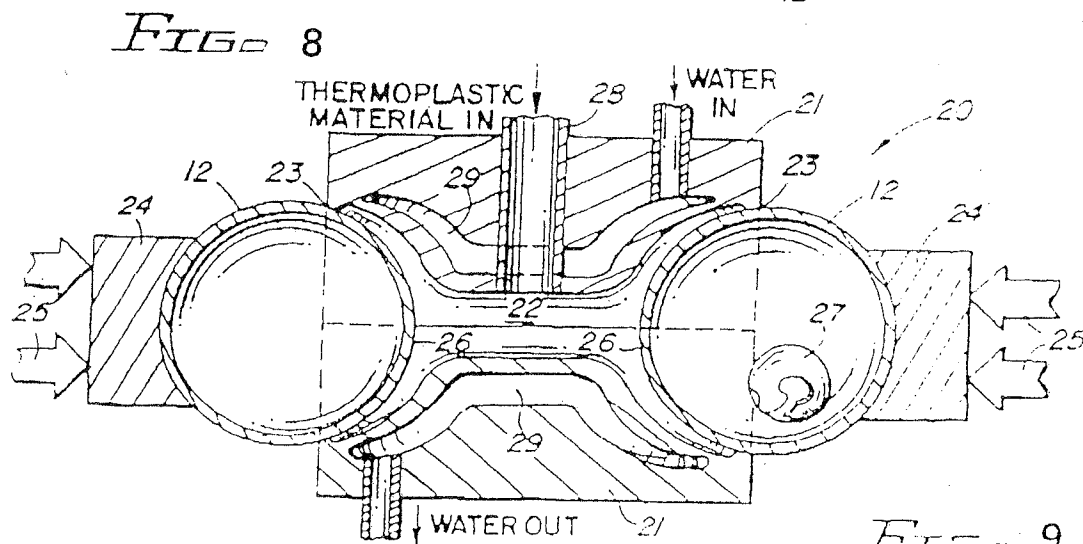
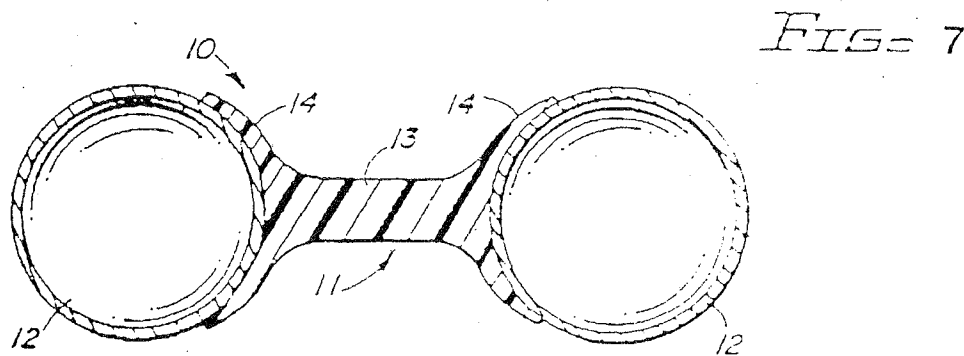
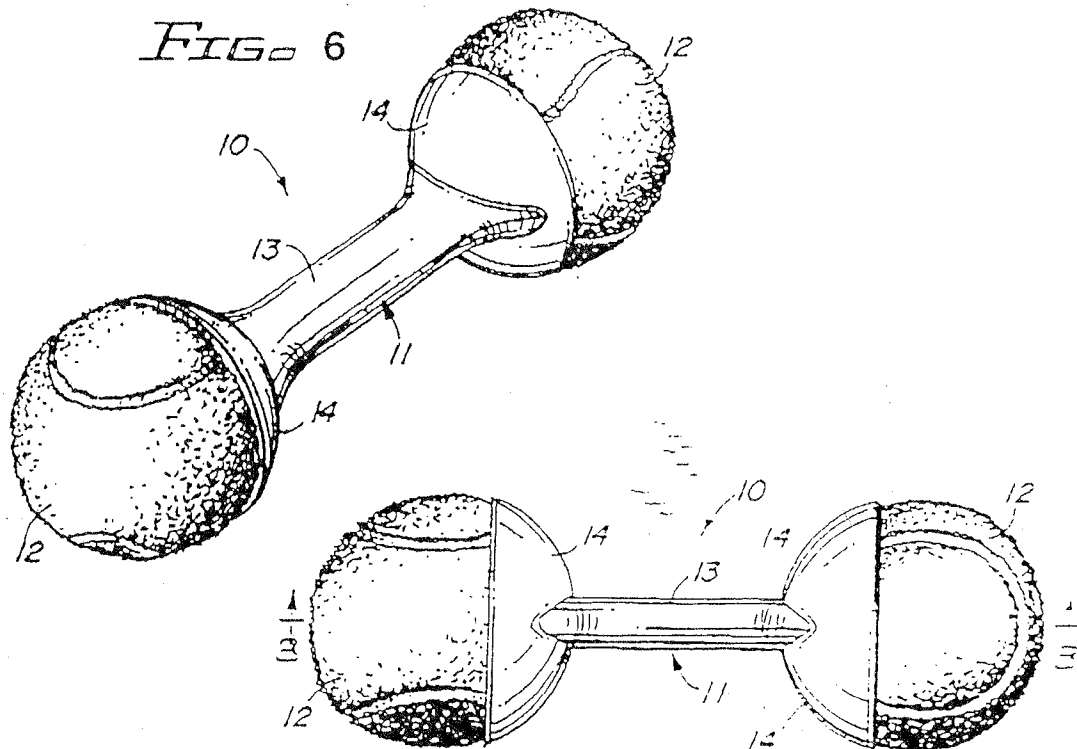


FIG. 3



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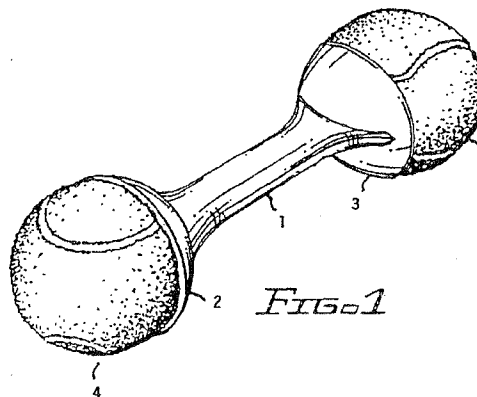


FIG. 1

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 98 11 8880

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6)
A	US 3 104 648 A (FISHER) 24 September 1963 * the whole document *	1	A01K15/02 B29C45/14
A	US 4 133 296 A (SMITH) 9 January 1979 * abstract; figures 1,2 *	1	
A	US 5 191 856 A (GORDON) 9 March 1993 * claims 1,4; figure 1 *	9	
A	BE 869 106 A (SPRL RASCO) 19 January 1979 * the whole document *	10	
A	GB 495 652 A (JOHN MORRELL AND COMPANY)		
A	US 3 731 926 A (VINCENT) 8 May 1973		
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6)
			A01K B29C
<p>The present search report has been drawn up for all claims</p>			
Place of search		Date of completion of the search	Examiner
THE HAGUE		15 December 1998	VON ARX, V
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons</p> <p>& : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

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European Patent
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Application Number

EP 98 11 8880

CLAIMS INCURRING FEES

The present European patent application comprised at the time of filing more than ten claims.

- ☐ Only part of the claims have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims and for those claims for which claims fees have been paid, namely claim(s):
- ☐ No claims fees have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims.

LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

see sheet B

- ☐ All further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for all claims.
- ☐ Only part of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the inventions in respect of which search fees have been paid, namely claims:
- ☒ None of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the invention first mentioned in the claims, namely claims:

1, 8 to 10



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LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION
SHEET B

Application Number

EP 98 11 8880

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

1. Claims: 1, 8 to 10

A toy

2. Claim : 2 to 7

A method for producing a product

ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.

EP 98 11 8880

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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15-12-1998

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For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82